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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses what colleges and universities can do to improve the capacity of the public schools to deliver quality education in social studies and other areas to America's children. The quality of public education can be improved by changing the system for delivering education and by improving the quality of teaching. Colleges and universities can give direction and provide leadership for the development of both these changes through research, teaching, and service. First, higher education institutions can conduct research to establish the efficacy of new delivery systems such as mini-computers for education and then help incorporate these new or improved systems into the existing school patterns. Secondly, better teacher training programs are needed. Colleges must insist on extended periods for teacher training, pushing for fifth and sixth year programs. Also, more teacher training needs to take place in the real school setting. Thirdly, recalling how social studies educators in Texas were unable recently to stop the passage of a bill that abolished social studies textbooks in the primary grades, the author stresses the pressing need for social studies educators to join together to provide a model for social studies nationwide. Social studies educators must communicate what they stand for, devise teacher training programs, and direct their research and service efforts toward implementing that model. They must collectively agree on what social studies is supposed to do for students in the schools and decide how teachers of social studies must behave if they are to produce those outcomes. (Author/RM)

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CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OUTREACH

By B. Dell Felder, University of Houston

Prepared for presentation to College and University Faculty Assembly, National Council for the Social Studies Annual Convention, Detroit, Michigan, November 20, 1981

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It is no secret to CUFA members that colleges and universities have fallen on hard times. It will come as no shock to most of you that American public education is also in trouble. Any discussion of possible cooperative linkages between universities and public schools pivots, it seems to me, on recognition that public education today stands at a crossroad. During the past 30 years, and especially the last decade, there has been growing disenchantment with the job that schools are doing. The schools are under seige from critics, parents, taxpayers, and politicians, all of whom are clamoring for change in one direction or another.

To me, the roadsigns at the crossroad are clear. One road will take us on a long, hard climb to redefinition and reconstruction of the public school system. Ultimately, that road will lead to reestablishment of public confidence in the schools. The other road will be a down-hill slide toward more and more "quickie fixes" in a never ending effort to remedy the ills. Ultimately, that road will take us to an even more fragmented system of public education and to a series of "alternatives" to it.

How did we get where we are? Most of us are all too well aware that as the years have passed, the schools have assumed new responsibilities within the context of old assumptions. New demands were accommodated within existing organizational structures and educational practices. The result is a system replete with dysfunctionalities, that has a history but not a defensible rationality for existence in today's world.

One of my colleagues, Robert Howsam, has said that "unless America's schools were almost divinely inspired in their original form, changes in the broader society would almost by definition have ensured their inadequacy by now. The reality is that an originally simple and unsophisticated system has been allowed or forced to grow in size, complexity, and responsibility but not to make adequate adaptive change in itself."

I do not think it does much good to dwell on the reasons why we find ourselves in this dilemma. There is probably no advantage in "blame-laying". It seems more important to get on with the business of doing something about the problems.

But what can colleges and universities do? What problems can they solve which will improve the capacity of the public schools to deliver quality education to America's children? I think if we can find answers to those questions, we will see a renaissance in our colleges and universities. When we do, I think we will find that confidence in our capacity to perform an important service will increase. And that confidence will lead ultimately to a revitalization of colleges and universities as institutions which serve important needs in this society.

But what can be done? What business and industry often do, when conditions are most unfavorable for profits, is create new, improved products by defining creative ways needs can be met. They try to sell those products to a public that did not even know they needed them, much less wanted them. Usually, this means breaking old patterns of thought about how "things ought to be" and establishing new and better ways of accomplishing goals. I think that is what colleges and universities can do in the present educational crisis.

The quality of education in our public schools can be improved in two basic ways. We can either change the system for delivering education or we can improve the quality of teaching. Or we can hopefully do both! Positive change in these two directions will improve our public schools. Colleges and universities can give direction and provide leadership for the development of both types of changes. New, improved "products" can be created in response to these needs.

I believe this can be accomplished through the university's traditional missions of research, teaching, and service. In our Colleges of Education, we have the best minds and the finest talent in the nation for conceptualizing, designing, trial-testing, and researching the effectiveness of improved educational programs. Why should these talents not be placed in service to the public schools of the country?

Colleges and universities can contribute in major ways to the development of improved delivery systems for education. Research can establish the efficacy of

of these approaches and can help us incorporate them into existing patterns which serve us well. We are already seeing interesting developments with the use of mini-computers and other technologies in the schools. These gadgets and devices are challenging time-worn notions about how instruction should be delivered in the classrooms. Recently, I was facinated at a demonstration of a mini-computer which took social studies students across the Oregon Trail and gave them immediate feedback on the wisdom of decisions they made along the way. Faculties in colleges of education need to take the lead in demonstrating the efficacy of technology, used creatively, to improve our social studies programs.

We could also forget the notion that the magic number is one teacher for every 25 or 30 pupils. We could actually devise systems for delivering education that would dramatically increase the teacher-pupil ratio. We could staff our schools with many more para-professionals who could assist a smaller number of highly trained, highly specialized master teachers by delivering instruction the master teachers designed.

We need talented minds and research and development efforts to create these new approaches. Our colleges and universities need to collaborate with other R&D agencies and with local schools to point out the need for improved products and to find better ways to deliver public education. We need to demonstrate these ways in real school settings so that school personnel and the public can see what can be accomplished. That must be a part of our effort if the political and economic inertia regarding changes in education is to be overcome.

What about improvements in the quality of teaching? I think the first thing we need to acknowledge is that we need vastly improved teaching training programs if the quality of teaching is going to improve. There is a chorus of laments nationwide about the qualifications of those who enter the teacher training programs. That is doubtless true, but we have not distinguished ourselves thus far, regardless of those who enter our teacher training programs, for turning out an outstandingly competent teacher. And how could we? There is simply no way we can produce competent teachers in the time available in our undergraduate programs today. We simply know far more than the meagre amount of time allocated to train preservice teachers allows us to transmit. I remind us all

that veterinarians get more training in our society than teachers do.

We must insist on extended periods for teacher training. Since I am firmly convinced of the importance of a sound general education for all teachers, I am convinced we need to push for fifth and sixth year programs. We must constantly urge local schools and communities to expand inservice and professional development requirements and opportunities and we need to look for creative ways to collaborate in those efforts. We can do a much better job training social studies teachers than we are doing. And we need to look seriously at the liklihood that much of that training needs to take place in the real school setting. And that our social studies colleagues in the public schools could be involved in significant roles as teacher educators.

In all our training efforts, we must insist that the practice of Teaching be based upon the use of the best knowledge we currently have regarding effective learning and teaching. And we must increase our research efforts in that direction.

But, you are probably muttering to youself, we all know these things need to be done. We have known about them for years and the fact is that we do not have the money, we do not have the political support, and we are not rewarded for doing things like this. I acknowledge that is partially true. But I refuse to let us off the hook quite that easily.

I think we can do some things that will make a big difference, right now! Let me just bring it home for us as social studies people for a minute. I think we have to get our act together before we can expect anybody out there to care whether we live or die! That may be a harsher judgment then most of want to hear, but I believe it to be true. I do not chink we <u>know</u> for sure what we stand for. And if we do not know that, I question seriously whether we can adequately train teachers or provide direction for improving social studies in the public schools.

Let me illustrate that point with a sad story. Recently, a bill was introduced in our state legislature in Texas that would abolish social studies textbooks in the primary grades. The move was motivated by economics and supported by the

state department of education which is under pressure from the public to do something about reading and math. Our social studies teachers and College faculties joined together (in a moment of rare collaboration) to fight passage of that bill. When they called on legislators, over and over they were met with the same defense. "Well, I just do not know what this social studies thing is all about anyway. Nobody seems able to say stright out what it is supposed to so. So, I do not suppose we need something like that for our kids more than we need reading and math." Our social studies people in Texas lost that fight in the legislature. The bill passed and we might as well kiss social studies good bye in the primary grades.

That is what I mean when I say we must get our act together. We have had years of arguing about the proper function of social studies. We have enjoyed the intellectual exercise. It has been enlightening to those of us who have participated in the dialogs and debates. But the time has come, it seems to me, when we must lay aside our disagreements in the interest of providing a model for social studies nationwide. We must communicate successfully what we stand for. That would have been of enormous help to those people in Texas as they fought their battle. And we must devise our teacher training programs and direct our reserach and service efforts toward implementing that model. We must collectively agree on what social studies is supposed to do for students in the schools and decide how teachers of social studies behave if they are to produce those outcomes.

We can start right here. We have had Social Studies Curriculum Guidelines published by NCSS for over a decade. When you study those Guidelines, as the NCSS Curriculum Committee has been doing for the past couple of years, you recognize that they describe the characteristics of "effective" social studies programs, as most of us would define them. How many of us, as social studies educators, are aware they exist? How many of us have incorporated them into our teacher training and inservice education programs and into the work we do with local schools?

NCSS has appointed a task force to study the desirability of a national scope and sequence statement. There are open hearings on this issue scheduled for tomorrow afternoon during this conference. How many of us are planning to attend that hearing? How many will speak to the issue. I think we need a

national scope and sequence statement -- not perhaps as the definitive statement, but as a model which the Profession is willing to stand by and acknowledge as defensible in light of social studies' appropriate mission in the curriculum. You need to be present at that hearing to express your views.

I am convinced of one thing. We cannot succeed by continuing piece meal efforts. Colleges of education and the public schools are going to make it if they are able to convince the public that they can make a serious contribution to the quality of education in this nation. They cannot do that standing separate from each other and working alone. As university faculties, we cannot do it in our home institutions unless we are joined by our local school colleagues. And local people cannot do it without the help of other social studies professionals across the nation. We need organizations like NCSS and CUFA to facilitate that kind of collaboration. And I think we need to take a stand on the major issues we face. At the very least, we need to decide to agree on what we stand for and work together to bring that about.

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